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British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency

Vital Statistics
British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency

Annual Financial and Performance Report For 1999/2000

Ministry of Health and Ministry Responsible for Seniors

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1. MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

I respectfully submit the fourth annual report on the operations of the British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency, established April 1, 1996.

This document reports on the Agency's performance in its fourth year of operation, as a Special Operating Agency (SOA), regarding financial and performance measurement information. The status on implementation of the flexibility policies established in the framework agreement is also included as an appendix.

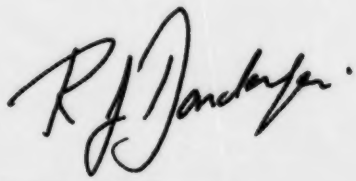
The Agency's primary objectives in the fourth year were to meet its financial and measurable performance targets. I am pleased to report that not only did the Agency meet its financial and measurable performance targets, but also in a number of areas the targets were surpassed. From a financial perspective, the Agency achieved a surplus against both its expenditure and revenue budgets. This resulted in a net surplus of revenue over expenditure of $2,266,048 representing a return to government of $121,048 above target.

I would like to highlight some of the accomplishments reported in this document:

- The entire Information System infrastructure was brought into Year 2000 compliance. Not a single problem was encountered by the Agency in the rollover to the year 2000.
- The acceptance by facsimile of Notice of Birth (NOB) forms was a tremendous success, and we have surpassed our five-year goal of receiving at 80% of NOBs through this medium. In fact, we are receiving 99% of this information by this means.
- The Agency met or surpassed all of its service standard targets in fiscal 2000. Of note is the more than 50% reduction in turnaround time on the event registration process.

In summary, I would like to acknowledge that the success of the Agency is a direct result of the people who work within, and in support of the organisation. The employees of the Vital Statistics Agency and its service providers continue to meet the challenge of making this organisation a success as a Special Operating Agency.

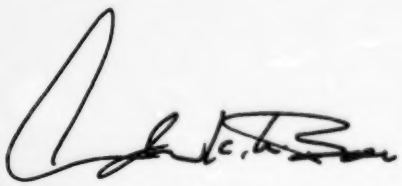
In looking to the future, the Agency has embarked on the development of a Data Warehouse to meet the heavy demand for health information. Issues such as timeliness, accessibility, quality, standards, and presentation are being addressed by the development of new tools to put the data more readily in the hands of medical researchers and administrators.



R. J. Danderfer
Chief Executive Officer and Director
British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency

2. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The statements of Revenue and Summary of Expenditures on the following pages represent the financial results of the Agency for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2000. These statements are unaudited. In order to ensure consistency with the Agency Business Plan, these statements do not reflect changes in accounting policy relating to the capitalisation of assets. Balances presented have been reconciled with balances presented in the Ministry of Finance Central Accounting System, period 15, Financial Reports for the 1999/2000 fiscal year. Detailed expenditure information for fiscal 1999/2000 consistent with details provided in previous reports is located in Appendix A of this Report.



Andrew K. McBride
Senior Financial Officer
British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency

2.1. EXPENDITURE SUMMARY 1999/2000

Actual net operating expenditures for the 1999/2000 fiscal year were $213,870 under budget. This resulted in a net surplus of $2,266,048, a return to government of $121,048 above target.

The difference in the budgetary allocation between the Provincial Government Estimates ($7,060,000) and the budget forecast in the Agency Business plan as reported here ($7,158,000) is the result of oversights during the Estimates preparation process. The actual expenses associated with the $98,000 allocation difference were $97,202. They account for the difference in actual expenses of $6,944,131reported here and the $6,846,929 reported in the Public Accounts.

The deficit of $110,866 in Salaries and Benefits results from a number of unplanned position reclassifications and their associated retroactive costs as well as an unanticipated leave liability adjustment. Budgetary reallocations to address these issues are planned for fiscal 2001 and 2002.

Operational cost surpluses of $90,9898 are primarily the result of reduced activity on the historical birth project (the addition of data to electronic birth registration files by a contract data entry provider to increase the number of birth certificates produced without manual intervention). This project will be brought back on track in fiscal 2000/01. Large differences between STOB expenditure forecasts made prior to the beginning of fiscal 1999 and actual expenditures realised in fiscal 2000 highlight the need to amend forecasts to reflect changes in plan and to make appropriate budget reallocations as part of the Estimates process.

The combination of the Salaries and Benefits deficit, the Operational Expenses surplus and the Grants surplus resulted in a minor expenditure deficit for the fiscal year. The $213,870 Net Operating Surplus for the year is attributable to higher than planned activity in recoveries, most notably greater than planned recoveries from work done for the Federal Government ($74,574), genealogy and research services ($85,229) and certification services for other Provincial Government Ministries ($38,819).

Capital asset acquisitions were under expended by $121,705 for the year. This was due to the postponement of much of the capital development and asset purchases associated with the data warehouse project which was deferred as a result of heavier than expected requirements on in-house resources and asset replacements associated with Year 2000 concerns. Capital Acquisitions on Personal Computer Hardware to address Year 2000 concerns exceeded the original plan by $152,393. A successful request for reallocation of these funds to fiscal 2001/02 under the expenditure carryovers provision of the Framework Agreement will enable completion of the Data Warehouse project as originally planned, though a year behind schedule.

EXPENDITURE SUMMARY 1999/2000

STOB		BUDGET 1999/00	ACTUAL 1999/00	VARIANCE 1999/00
01	BASE SALARIES	3,812,000	3,897,771	(85,771)
02	SUPPLEMENTARY SALARIES	59,000	42,921	16,079
03	EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	800,000	841,174	(41,174)
	TOTAL SALARIES AND BENEFITS	4,671,000	4,781,866	(110,866)
10	TRAVEL	50,000	58,402	(8,402)
20	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	8,000	11,131	(3,131)
21	ADVISORY CONTRACTS	25,000	0	25,000
25	INFORMATION SYSTEMS	1,223,000	1,179,996	43,004
30	OFFICE AND BUSINESS EXPENSES	564,000	668,249	(104,249)
31	OFFICE FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT	56,000	97,446	(41,446)
42	STATUTORY NOTICES	116,000	109,306	6,694
50	UTILITIES/MATERIALS/SUPPLIES	53,000	67,762	(14,762)
60	AMORTIZATION EXPENSE	421,000	228,239	192,761
65	BUILDING OCCUPANCY CHARGES	556,000	560,481	(4,481)
	TOTAL OPERATIONAL EXPENSES	3,072,000	2,981,012	90,988
80	GRANTS	18,000	0	18,000
82	CONTRIBUTIONS	56,000	56,952	(952)
	TOTAL GRANTS	74,000	56,952	17,048
	GROSS OPERATING EXPENDITURES	7,817,000	7,819,831	(2,830)
97	INTERNAL RECOVERIES	(276,000)	(314,819)	(38,819)
99	RECOVERIES - EXTERNAL	(383,000)	(560,881)	(177,881)
	TOTAL RECOVERIES	(659,000)	(875,700)	(216,700)
	NET OPERATING EXPENDITURES	7,158,000	6,944,131	213,870
	REVENUES	9,303,000	9,210,178	(92,822)
	SURPLUS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENDITURE	2,145,000	2,266,048	121,048
	FULL TIME EQUIVALENT EMPLOYEES	97.00	96.02	0.98
CAPITAL ASSET ACQUISITIONS				
68	SYSTEMS ASSET ACQUISITIONS	635,000	525,204	109,796
75	MACH./EQUIP. ACQUISITIONS	55,000	43,091	11,909
	TOTAL CAPITAL ASSET ACQUISITIONS	690,000	568,295	121,705

2.2. REVENUE 1999/2000

Actual revenues for the Agency in fiscal 1999/2000 were $92,822 below estimate. While trends in Wills Services and marriage licenses continue to reflect declining demands (and do so at a greater than expected rate), a large part of the reason for not meeting the target is due to an upward adjustment of the target based on fiscal 1998/99 results. The fiscal 1998/99 actual revenue exceeded the target by $150,772. In response, higher expectations were placed on revenues for all years from fiscal 1999/2000 through 2003/2004. It is now clear that the high service demand experienced in fiscal 1998/99 was an anomaly. Targets for fiscal 2001/2002 through fiscal 2003/2004 will be reduced to more realistic levels. Much of the increased revenue in fiscal 1998/99 can be attributed to requests for rush services. The increased efficiency of the Vision processing system and other turn around time reduction measures has reduced this demand. The reduced demand has resulted in lower than targeted revenues.

	BUDGET 1999/2000	ACTUAL 1999/2000	VARIANCE 1999/2000
MISCELLANEOUS	**20,000**	**685**	**(19,315)**
BIRTH CERTIFICATES	**3,342,158**	**3,253,255**	**(88,903)**
BIRTH CERTIFICATES AND SEARCHES	2,715,800	2,607,072	(108,728)
BIRTH CERTIFICATE COPIES	35,000	42,170	7,170
RUSH BIRTH CERTIFICATES	591,358	604,013	12,655
AMENDMENTS	**50,649**	**44,145**	**(6,504)**
CHANGES OF NAME	**506,602**	**551,002**	**44,400**
NAME CHANGES - APPLICANT	444,538	519,769	75,231
CHANGE OF NAME - ADDITIONAL PERSONS	52,018	18,414	(33,604)
CHANGE OF NAME - CERTIFICATES	12,046	12,819	773
WILLS	**1,231,982**	**1,076,909**	**(155,073)**
WILLS SEARCHES	271,416	217,339	(54,077)
ALIAS NAMES SEARCH	0	25,423	25,423
WILLS NOTICES	960,566	834,237	(126,329)
DEATH CERTIFICATES	**1,374,568**	**1,426,779**	**52,211**
DEATH CERTIFICATES	1,353,318	1,411,062	57,744
DEATH CERTIFICATE COPIES	21,250	15,717	(5,533)
MARRIAGE LICENCES	**2,121,600**	**2,049,275**	**(72,325)**
MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES	**380,591**	**494,874**	**114,283**
REGULAR MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES	229,591	332,867	103,276
RUSH MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES	126,000	141,453	15,453
MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE COPIES	25,000	20,554	(4,446)
CIVIL MARRIAGES	**298,350**	**296,498**	**(1,852)**
DISHONORED CHEQUES	**4,500**	**14,360**	**9,860**
ALLOWANCE FOR DOUBTFUL ACCOUNTS	**(30,000)**	**2,306**	**32,306**
TOTAL REVENUES	**9,303,000**	**9,210,178**	**(92,822)**

EXPENDITURE SUMMARY 1999/2000

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TOTAL REVENUES	**9,303,000**	**9,210,178**	**(92,822)**

3. PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The major goals of the Agency is to contain costs while providing increased service volumes, improved efficiency and effectiveness, and an increased level of customer satisfaction. The performance measures detailed on the following pages are used to determine the extent to which the Agency is meeting some of its strategic goals; specifically goals 1, 2, 3 and 6 as defined in the Framework Agreement and Business Plan. The measures in the tables on the following pages are designed, through comparison of target to actual results, to report on the Agency's ability to meet targets established in the Business Plan. Management also uses them for service evaluation and planning.

Service volume measures are used to confirm whether or not the number of services being provided meet expectations. Management also uses this information in planning new programs and determining resource allocations.

Gross Unit Costs represent an amalgam of expenditure and service volume information. They are used to determine if the Agency is obtaining economic efficiencies as a result of its efforts to streamline processing operations and provide more services at less cost.

Service Standards - Days to Complete is a measure to determine if the Agency is meeting objectives of reducing turnaround time; this measure is important because current technologies lead Agency customers to demand faster turnaround on services. This measure is also important to monitor the effect of processing changes being implemented to reduce turnaround times.

Customer Satisfaction Surveys monitor customer feedback to determine if service delivery, staff training and quality service initiatives are being effective.

In general these tables indicate that while volumes did not grow as projected, unit costs were reduced below target levels (a result of reduced spending). Service turnaround times were reduced significantly more than originally targeted and customer satisfaction increases met or exceeded projected levels for the most part.

3.1. VOLUMES

		Forecast	Actual	Variance
Certificates				
	Birth Certificates	129,430	126,368	(3,062)
	Marriage Certificates	33,926	37,764	3,838
	Death Certificates	50,345	52,266	1,921
	Total Certificates	**213,701**	**216,398**	**2,697**
Registrations				
	Birth Registrations	45,630	43,034	(2,596)
	Notice of Birth	45,630	43,034	(2,596)
	Marriage Registrations	22,100	21,801	(299)
	Death Registrations	28,392	28,852	460
	Total Registrations	**141,752**	**136,721**	**(5,031)**
Wills				
	Wills Search	12,371	12,883	512
	Wills Notices	57,798	50,514	(7,284)
	Total Wills	**70,169**	**63,397**	**(6,772)**
Marriage Licence Applications		**22,100**	**21,311**	**(789)**
Change of Name		**5,171**	**4,618**	**(553)**
Other Services				
	Commemorative Certificates	2,434	2,669	235
	Amendments	1,876	1,649	(227)
	Genealogy	1,622	1,933	311
	Adoption Records	800	795	(5)
	Photocopies	1,625	3,124	1,499
	Total Other	**8,357**	**10,170**	**1,813**

Service volumes for registrations of birth, physicians notice of birth and marriage are below expected volumes for the third consecutive year. This indicates that the birth rate in the province is not increasing at the expected rate and that the marriage rate is also declining at a faster rate than forecast. This factor is also reflected in the decreasing volume of marriage licences issued.

Wills Services, particularly volumes of Wills Notices filed are below expected levels for the third consecutive year. Promotion initiatives have been somewhat effective, as volumes have increased since Vital Statistics became a Special Operating Agency. The volume of wills services was 61,037 for fiscal 1996/97.

Higher than expected volumes continue to be experienced in the revenue generating services of certificate production, processing change of name applications and other services; most of which are high activity and high cost services.

3.1. VOLUMES

		Forecast	Actual	Variance
Certificates				
	Birth Certificates	129,430	126,368	(3,062)
	Marriage Certificates	33,926	37,764	3,838
	Death Certificates	50,345	52,266	1,921
	Total Certificates	**213,701**	**216,398**	**2,697**
Registrations				
	Birth Registrations	45,630	43,034	(2,596)
	Notice of Birth	45,630	43,034	(2,596)
	Marriage Registrations	22,100	21,801	(299)
	Death Registrations	28,392	28,852	460
	Total Registrations	**141,752**	**136,721**	**(5,031)**
Wills				
	Wills Search	12,371	12,883	512
	Wills Notices	57,798	50,514	(7,284)
	Total Wills	**70,169**	**63,397**	**(6,772)**
Marriage Licence Applications		**22,100**	**21,311**	**(789)**
Change of Name		**5,171**	**4,813**	**(358)**
Other Services				
	Commemorative Certificates	2,434	2,669	235
	Amendments	1,876	1,649	(227)
	Genealogy	1,622	1,933	311
	Adoption Records	800	795	(5)
	Photocopies	1,625	3,124	1,499
	Total Other	**8,357**	**10,170**	**1,813**

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Higher than expected volumes continue to be experienced in the revenue generating services of certificate production, processing change of name applications and other services; most of which are high activity and high cost services.

3.2. UNIT COSTS

	Target	Actual	Variance
Regular Certificates	15.20	14.37	(0.83)
Rush Certificates	33.86	32.02	(1.84)
Registrations	14.72	13.92	(0.80)
Wills Searches	17.21	16.27	(0.94)
Wills Notices	6.81	6.44	(0.37)
Marriage Licences	12.44	11.76	(0.68)
Regular Change of Name - Applicant	120.22	113.68	(6.54)
Change of Name - Additional Persons	15.20	14.37	(0.83)
Other	34.08	32.23	(1.85)

In fiscal 1999/2000 the Agency continued to reduce its unit costs in all service areas and perform better than was forecast in the Agency Business Plan. The reduction in unit costs is primarily a reflection of the effort to maintain expenditure levels while increasing the overall volume and number of services delivered. The effect of these efforts was to increase recoveries, which in turn resulted in a net operating surplus of $213,870.

Details on the calculation of unit costs are published in section 2.5.1 of the 1999 - 2004 Agency Business Plan.

3.3. SERVICE STANDARDS - DAYS TO COMPLETE

	Forecast	Actual	Variance
Certificates	6	5	1
Registrations	70	33	37
Wills Notices	5	3	2
Wills Searches	10	7	3
Marriage Licences	1	1	0
Change of Name	15	12	3
Other	15	12	3
Percentage of Units Completed	85%	85%	0

The Agency met or performed better than all of its service standard targets in fiscal 2000. Of note is the more than 50% reduction in turnaround time on the event registration process. This result is due primarily as a result of fax transmission of Notices of Birth and registrations of death from hospitals and funeral homes and also in part to the processing efficiencies of the VISION system.

3.4. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

		Target	Actual	Variance
Courtesy	Excellent	60%	65%	5%
	Good	32%	29%	-3%
	Acceptable	6%	4%	-2%
	Below Standard	1%	1%	0%
	Poor	1%	1%	0%
Helpfulness	Excellent	58%	66%	8%
	Good	30%	27%	-3%
	Acceptable	8%	5%	-3%
	Below Standard	2%	1%	-1%
	Poor	2%	1%	-1%
Promptness	Excellent	60%	67%	7%
	Good	27%	24%	-3%
	Acceptable	9%	5%	-4%
	Below Standard	2%	1%	-1%
	Poor	2%	3%	1%

Survey returns indicated an increase in customer satisfaction in most areas.

Responses indicating positive satisfaction (acceptable to excellent) exceeded targets by a net of two percent while negative satisfaction responses (below standard or poor) varied from target by a net of two percent. Overall there was a significant movement from acceptable and good responses to excellent in all categories.

A regional manger follows up all negative responses and survey results are reviewed at quarterly management meetings. Actions taken as a result of survey data are workflow reviews to identify and correct processing problems, and staff training initiatives to improve courtesy and helpfulness.

4. REGISTRY OPERATIONS

4.1. BIRTH REGISTRY

4.1.1. Hospital/Physicians/Registered Midwives

The Vital Statistics Agency will strive to receive the Notice of Birth information on an electronic medium in order to ensure the timely capture of registration and statistical data. Initially, hospitals will be requested to transmit Notice of Birth forms directly by facsimile to ensure data is recorded prior to the receipt of birth registration forms from parent(s). In addition to facsimile receipt of Notice of Birth forms, the Agency will accept documents in the form of electronic transmission from the Admission, Discharge and Transfer (ADT) Systems of the hospitals. Hospitals will continue to act as District Registrars to assist parents in completion of the required forms.

Plan Accomplishments

The acceptance by facsimile of Notice of Birth (NOB) forms was a tremendous success, and we have already reached our five-year goal of receiving at 80% of all NOBs through this medium. In fact, we are receiving 99% of information by this means, with the other one percent being submitted by Registered Midwives who are not currently operating a facsimile service out of their homes.

Acceptance via facsimile did identify some problems with clarity as well as missing medical data. Ongoing liaison with the hospitals and physicians by Agency staff has greatly diminished any associated problems.

Future Plans

During 2000/2001, the Agency will continue to assist any hospitals requesting advice on the integration of their ADT system with the requirement of submitting the Notice of Birth. However, with limited finances in hospital administration functions, this activity is not anticipated to have a significant volume of activity over the next three years.

The Vital Statistics Agency plans to continue liaising with hospitals to fix any data quality problems identified, as well as instituting procedures for follow-up with physicians to ensure forms are signed, that Medical Services Commission numbers are included, and that complications of pregnancy are clearly identified. In addition to one-on-one follow-up, the Agency will develop a guidebook for the proper completion of the NOB forms.

A process will be put into place to ensure that the local public health nurse contacts new mothers when their children are delivered without the assistance of a physician or registered midwife.

4.1.2. Birth Parents

The Agency will monitor developments related to the recognition of electronic signatures and implement such technologies when their validity is proven.

Plan Accomplishments

A legal interpretation was obtained which supported the Director being able to accept signatures of parents in any format provided, including electronic or by facsimile.

Future Plans

A pilot project will be undertaken to accept Birth Registrations via facsimile from other Government locations, such as the Ministry for Children and Families, and Government Agent Offices. This service may also be extended to non-Government Vital Statistics Service Provider Agencies.

The feasibility of creating a WEB version of the Registration of Live Birth will be undertaken in contemplation of the move toward true electronic capture of both data and signatures. The study will include a cost benefit analysis of providing computers to the larger birthing hospitals to be made available to parents wishing to complete the entire process – including the ordering of certificates – on-line before leaving the facility.

4.1.3. Physician/Coroner and Funeral Home

The number of Stillbirth registrations is very small in relation to normal birth events (approximately 300 per year or less than one half of one percent of all births yearly). The Agency does not plan to move away from the use of paper documents as the best alternative.

Plan Accomplishments

Although not included in the business plan, the Agency moved to accept stillbirth registration documents via facsimile in order to register these events on a timely basis and issue the required burial permits for disposition purposes. Information was provided to hospitals regarding the laws covering the disposition of remains of stillbirths and deaths to new-born infants.

Future Plans

The Stillbirth Registration form will be reviewed and modified, with one planned change being the elimination of the requirement to obtain signatures of the grieving parents. In this way, the registration would be more aligned with the current death registration process than with that of birth.

4.1.4. Vital Statistics Offices

The Agency continues to receive two separate documents for the registration of a birth, and the linking of the two documents becomes a key task. Where errors exist or there is a failure to link the two documents, follow-ups are activated.

Plan Accomplishments

Development of an on-line 'Unlinked' report now allows any one of a number of users to access data to 'link' the two Registration documents together to complete a birth event. The Agency also introduced microfilm scanning, which allows direct electronic transmission of birth records to regional offices.

The Birth Registration was modified to track Aboriginal births "on" and" off" reserves in British Columbia, and the Notice of Birth form was changed to an 8½" x 11" page, making it easier to read and complete. By transmitting the document between the hospitals and Vital Statistics via facsimile, the cost of carbon paper was eliminated.

Future Plans

The Agency will continue to microfilm documents in the short term but will implement alternative electronic storage solutions as they become available to streamline Agency operations.

4.2. DEATH REGISTRY (MORTALITY)

4.2.1. Funeral Homes

Funeral Homes are encouraged to act as district registrars for the purpose of registering deaths, issuing death certificates and providing burial permits in their work with client families, relatives and friends.

It is the Agency's intent to work with funeral homes to move all aspects of data transmission from the funeral homes by an electronic media format (including fax, disk and use of the Internet).

Plan Accomplishments

Training in the functions of district registrar was provided to funeral homes with the result that all funeral homes registered with the Vital Statistics Agency now act as district registrars. This has resulted in improved services to client families/relatives/friends and improved efficiency of funeral home staff in meeting their vital event registration responsibilities. Feedback from funeral home operators has allowed the computer program developed by the Agency and used by funeral home staff, to be modified to meet specific issues identified. In particular the agency has formatted the death registration form so that printing and format regardless of printer type is now clear, legible and easily read.

Comments received by persons using the death registration form for genealogy purposes identified the value of having the informant recorded on this form. Discussion with funeral homes indicated that the requirement for an informant's signature placed additional burden on a grieving family while adding little additional information. In response, the death registration form was modified to remove this requirement and in turn funeral homes have continued their efforts to ensure informant information is as full and complete as possible.

Adoption of the fax alternative for data submission has been fully embraced by the funeral homes with over 95% of all registrations/medical certificates of death being submitted in this manner. At the local level funeral homes have been authorised to receive the medical certificate of death forms from physicians and coroners by fax, providing that clarity, legibility and readability meet operational requirements. In large urban centres over 75% of physicians submit the required documents to funeral homes by fax while in smaller centres this number is closer to 20% due in part to funeral home operators who prefer to personally pick up these forms from local practitioners. In the case of coroners almost 100% of forms are sent to funeral homes by fax.

Review of the disk submission alternative has determined that no benefit would exist for either the funeral homes or the Agency over the present fax alternative and further work on this alternative has been stopped.

Future Plans

Discussion with the Funeral Home Association has indicated that a number of its members would be very interested in participating in a pilot of the Internet submission alternative. Detailed procedural specifications will be developed during the coming year with a view to addressing any technical issues that may impact this alternative.

Work will also be undertaken with the Funeral Home Association and funeral homes to expand their participation in the Wills Search activity. This element is a key component of the estate probate process and is a function that could be readily facilitated by funeral homes as part of their family consultation process. Detailed procedures for funeral home participation in this activity will be developed during this year.

4.2.2. Coroner

The Agency will encourage coroners to submit Medical Certificates of Death directly to funeral homes by facsimile and to submit any amendments directly to the Agency by fax.

Plan Accomplishments

Information provided by funeral homes indicates that coroners have fully embraced this alternative, resulting in extremely prompt submission and receipt of these key documents.

In the case of the Agency, all coroners are faxing these documents directly to a dedicated fax machine located within the Agency's Medical Coding Unit. As a result these documents can be quickly reviewed by professional medical specialists and questions reviewed with the coroner while these cases are still fresh in the minds of the coroners.

Future Plans

Input from some coroner's has indicated that a computer program, similar to that used by the funeral homes may be of assistance to them in completing the medical certificate forms. Further discussions will be undertaken as to the value, interest and support for the development of such an option.

4.2.3. Physician

The Agency will encourage physicians to submit Medical Certificates of Death directly to funeral homes by facsimile.

Plan Accomplishments

Work by the funeral homes, particularly in the large urban centres where travel, parking and overall volumes provide the potential for significant benefits has resulted in over 75% of physicians sending their medical certificates of death by facsimile. Where problems occur with legibility, funeral homes have been following up with personal pickup of the original paper document. Physicians have found this alternative to be beneficial as it allows the document to be handled once in their office and in turn reduces staff time required to mail or hand over the document to, in-person funeral home staff.

In smaller centres, funeral homes find that ongoing personal interaction is the most effective alternative while facilitating continuing contact with the medical professionals in their communities. As volumes are significantly smaller in these centres the time impact on funeral home staff is minimal.

Future Plans

The Agency will continue to work with funeral homes in facilitating the use of faxed forms by ensuring that information releases to practitioners outline the benefits associated with this activity.

4.2.4. Vital Statistics Offices

The Agency will continue to receive documents by fax and will continue to explore alternative electronic storage options.

Plan Accomplishments

Use of dedicated facsimile machines on a call rotation basis (where if one machine is busy, the call automatically routes to the next available machine) has resulted in a complete acceptance of this alternative by funeral homes. The effect of this has been that where the time between a death event and the information being available on the Agency's computer system had gone from an average of 19.5 days in 1996 to 22.7 days in 1998, by February 2000 this time lag had dropped to 8.3 days. This in turn allows the Agency to alert specific information users (example Children's Commissioner) in a more timely fashion.

Modification of the information contained on the Medical Certificate of Death to include the name of the funeral home handling the related death registration allows the Agency to more easily follow-up with funeral homes regarding specific death information. As well, additional edit checks have been added to the processing system which allows more effective identification of information which may be either missing or not within expected norms. Early identification allows funeral homes to follow-up and to provide clarification while the medical information is easily available to physicians and coroners.

Future Plans

Work on digital imaging alternatives will be continued in the coming year. Experience developed from the use of this medium for death registrations being made available under the genealogy option may allow for significant developments to be achieved. In addition, work on the conversion of ICD9 to ICD10 coding related to medical cause of death information could be greatly facilitated by this option. Work with companies experienced in this area will be undertaken to determine the feasibility of this option being used.

4.3. MARRIAGE REGISTRY

4.3.1. Religious Representatives

Under the *Marriage Act*, the Agency maintains a register of Religious Representatives from established religious denominations who are authorised to solemnise marriage in British Columbia.

Religious Representatives constitute the largest single group of service provider clients for the Vital Statistics Agency. At present, the Religious Representative Registry contains over 6,500 individuals registered as authorised to solemnise marriage according to the rites and usage of more than 300 religious bodies.

Plan Accomplishments

During the calendar year 1999 religious representatives accounted for approximately 43% of the 21,616 marriages registered.

During 1999 minor VISION enhancements were instituted to ensure the integrity of the validation routines utilised to audit every marriage conducted by religious representatives. This validation function ensures that every official is legally registered under the Marriage Act to conduct the ceremony submitted for registration.

In 1999 the software utilised by the Religious Registry to maintain registration and administration data for both religious representatives and religious bodies was regenerated to ensure Year 2000 compatibility.

Future Plans

In 2000/2001 the Agency will contact all Religious Bodies recognised in British Columbia to introduce the option of allowing religious representatives to forward Marriage Licence/Registration documents via facsimile. Implementation of this process will contribute to the timely processing of marriage event documents and allow for virtually "next business day" production of large marriage certificates.

In response to client suggestions, enhancements will be made to church listings generated by the Registry ACCESS application software in order to facilitate their direct use by religious bodies for the reporting, confirmation and updating of religious representative status to the Agency.

4.3.2. Marriage Commissioners

The *Marriage Act* provides for the appointment of private marriage commissioners to solemnise marriage. The Vital Statistics Agency monitors the demand for Marriage Commissioner services, and selects and trains Marriage Commissioners.

Vital Statistics Agency currently has over 280 active marriage commissioners appointed under Section 32 of the *Marriage Act*, who performed 57% of the 21,616 marriage solemnised in 1999 in British Columbia.

Plan Accomplishments

The routine monitoring of client demand and service levels resulted in the appointment and training of 34 new marriage commissioners including five aboriginal appointments made at the request of British Columbia first nations' people.

The Agency maintained its high level of community responsiveness by conducting a number of marriage commissioner were recruited in the Greater Vancouver area to address specific community requirements for additional marriage commissioners able to accommodate the ethnic diversity of the lower mainland.

In early 1999, all private marriage commissioners were authorised to forward Marriage Licence/Registration documents to the Vital Statistics Agency via facsimile. The implementation of this process contributes to the timely processing of marriage event documents and allows for virtually "next business day" production of large marriage certificates. In addition, the ability of a couple to obtain a marriage certificate via RUSH service if necessary has been greatly enhanced. As of March 2000, approximately ten percent of all marriage event documents were being submitted via facsimile.

Future Plans

The Vital Statistics Agency will commission a contractor to survey all marriage commissioners to solicit and record candid input respecting the services, fees, commissions and future direction of the Private Marriage Commissioner Program.

The survey and resulting program review may provide the Agency sufficient data to support a submission to Treasury Board.

4.3.3. Marriage Licence Issuers

The Vital Statistics Agency hopes to utilise recent advancements in WEB technology to enhance its ability to create a direct interface between VISION and regional/field marriage licence issuers. The Internet will allow such services to be extended beyond direct government service centres such as Government Agent offices to a wider range of private sector service providers.

Plan Accomplishments

As a result of Year 2000 issues and competing system priorities, the initiative to pursue this program has been deferred to 2000/2001.

Future Plans

Work will be undertaken to assess whether the WEB application being developed to allow Government Agent access to VISION could be enhanced to include marriage licence issuer functionality.

4.3.4. Marriage Certificates

In April of 1998 the fee regulation associated with marriage licences was amended to provide for the automatic issuance of a large marriage certificate upon subsequent filing of a couple's registration of marriage. As a consequence of this initiative, the planned development of dedicated stand-alone software and web technology to allow marriage commissioners and other service providers to issue marriage certificates was discontinued.

4.4. CHANGE OF NAME REGISTRY

4.4.1. Change of Name Processing

Because of the complexity of its transactions a change of name has high unit cost implications. The Agency will continue to streamline associated processes to minimise those costs.

Plan Accomplishments

A number of changes to the computer processing system were identified and modifications made to the Change of Name program to streamline the collection and dissemination of data. As a result, the applications are completed more easily and on a timely basis

The addition of a complete correspondence module with standardised letters also contributed to timesaving. In addition, the module now allows all users to track the progress of a file from initiation through completion.

Future Plans

The possibility exists to offer a new service to persons undergoing a legal name change – the issuance of a new birth certificate following the name change. As individuals requesting a name change may have been born in other jurisdictions, the Agency will enter into discussion with the other provinces to seek agreement on the process for ensuring the updated certificates are automatically generated following a BC name change.

4.4.2. Archiving Supporting Documents

The use of digital imaging to archive support documents may allow regional access to these archives through secure electronic server facilities.

Plan Accomplishments

Microfilm scanners have been purchased to replace ageing reader printers. This allows images to be sent out to the regional offices as e-mail attachments, streamlining the data transfer process.

Future Plans

The Agency will continue to review and assess other media for document archiving and retrieval.

4.4.3. Reports to External Registries

In order to enhance the timeliness of the transmission of these records, the Agency plans to replace the current manual mailing of documents with the electronic transmission of data directly to the other provinces.

Plan Accomplishments

A system-generated report to other Canadian provinces was developed to replace the process of producing individual registrations for each event. This report runs weekly, capturing all changes of name occurring during that period, and is mailed out to each of the provinces at the beginning of each week.

Future Plans

With the new national routing system, which is being planned to connect data across the country, a study will be undertaken to determine whether this information could easily be fed electronically, thereby eliminating a paper record completely.

4.4.4. Gazetteer of Change of Name

The Agency will investigate amending the Name Act to substitute the requirement to publish intent in a newspaper with publishing on the Internet.

Plan Accomplishments

Work on Year 2000 issues and modifications to the Change of Name module in the VISION computer system precluded follow-up of this item.

Future Plans

In 2000/2001, Regional Operations staff will confer with solicitors to determine if advertising on a WEB-site would fall within the current legislative guidelines, or if a change to legislation would be required.

4.5. WILLS NOTICE REGISTRY

4.5.1. Registration of Wills Notices

Wills Notices are submitted by mail or electronically using Access BC (BC Online). The Agency plans to introduce electronic submission via secure Internet server in fiscal 1999/2000.

Work will continue with the legal community to encourage and expand the use of the BC Online option for Wills Notice submission to reduce omissions and errors on the documents themselves and to reduce registration turn around time.

Plan Accomplishments

In 1999/2000 the Agency fell slightly short of its expectations of increasing submission of Wills Notices via Access BC. The Secure Web Application development was delayed as a result of directing resources to Year 2000 preparations.

Future Plans

In 2000/2001 the Agency will continue to support the Access BC application and will recommend its use for Solicitors who are not currently subscribers. The Agency hopes that improvements to Access BC's web application will induce new subscribers. The Agency plans to complete and implement the secure Internet server project by the end of the second quarter of fiscal 2001.

4.5.2. Wills Notice Searches

Searches for Wills Notices are submitted by mail or electronically using Access BC (BC Online). The Agency plans to introduce electronic submission via secure Internet server in fiscal 1999/2000.

Work will continue with the legal community to encourage and expand the use of the Access BC option for Search of Wills Notice submission. This should reduce omissions and errors on the

documents themselves and reduce time lost to the legal representatives of estate that result from mail delays in the mail submission process.

Plan Accomplishments

In 1999/2000 the Agency's expectations of increasing Access BC transactions for Wills Searches were met though the Secure Web Application development was delayed do to preparations for Year 2000.

Future Plans

In 2000/2001, the Agency will undertake the development of direct transmission of Wills Searches from Access BC into VISION to reduce processing time by 1 to 2 days. The Agency will continue to support the Access BC application and will recommend its use for the submission of Wills Searches to Solicitors who are not currently subscribers.

4.5.3. Vital Statistics Agency

The Vital Statistics Agency continues to receive Wills Notice forms and ensures that they are recorded in the registry. A computer generated mail form acknowledges every Wills Notice successfully filed. A large number of microfilm reels must be accessed when responding to a positive Search of Wills Notices. The Agency is committed to identify an alternative electronic storage medium for the recording of Wills Notice images to enable batch production of Wills Notice Search results.

Plan Accomplishments

In 1999/2000 Wills notices continue to be recorded on the registry and microfilmed and acknowledgements continue to be electronically generated automatically when a Wills Notice is registered. In 1999, two microfilm digital scanner readers were purchased as part of the Agency need to replace two of its older microfilm reader/printers. This new technology provided the Agency with the opportunity to experiment with the possibility of delivering digitally imaged copies of searched Wills Notices to applicants via e-mail on the web.

Future Plans

In 2000/2001, the Agency will continue to explore the use of digital imaging technology as an alternative electronic storage medium for storage and access of copies of Wills Notice documents.

5. SUPPORT SERVICES STRATEGY

5.1. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND MEASUREMENT

The Support Services group manages the statutory financial and performance reporting requirements of the Agency.

5.1.1. Performance Measurement

As part of its mandate, the Support Services Branch monitors the gathering of performance measurement information and assists in the effective and efficient management of the Agency. The Support Services Branch was to undertake a quality assessment survey of Agency operations in support of the preparation of a quality improvement plan by fiscal year end.

Plan Accomplishments

The organisational self assessment survey was completed in December and the quality Improvement plan was prepared, submitted and accepted by the Quality Council of BC (QCBC) in mid April. Completion of the assessment and the development of the quality improvement plan resulted in Agency being awarded its bronze level on the QCBC excellence program.

Future Plans

In 2000/01 the Support Services Branch will continue to assist the Agency in strengthening management decisions by working to develop improved performance measures and guiding the Agency towards its silver level on the Quality Council of British Columbia excellence program.

5.1.2. Financial and Performance Reporting

Branch members are to prepare quarterly financial and performance measurements and forecasts for review by Treasury Board Staff as well as the Agency Annual Financial and Performance Report.

Plan Accomplishments

Quarterly and Annual Financial and Performance reports were prepared as required. The Agency's reporting process and some of its performance measures have been used as examples to demonstrate accountability reporting in the new course for government managers entitled "Redefining Financial Management". A review of the recommendations from the Enns Report on Accountability in Government revealed the Agency to be very close to meeting all of the recommendations within the scope of its authority.

Future Plans

In 2000/01 the Support Services Branch will continue to refine and improve the quality of its reports and performance measures as well as ensure complete compliance with government accountability initiatives.

5.2. HISTORICAL VITAL EVENT RECORDS

The Support Services Branch is charged with the management of all vital event records. There is a substantial amount of effort required to handle historical records that have not been completely integrated into the Agency's electronic data systems. The Branch continues to seek solutions to increase efficiencies in record management.

5.2.1. Release of Historical Vital Event Records

Legislation currently permits births, marriage, and death records to be publicly released 100 years, 75 years and 20 years, respectively, after the event. The Agency is involved in an ongoing project with BC Archives to make these records widely available.

Plan Accomplishments

The popularity of the BC Archives WEB site, which contains the index information on births, marriages and deaths, continues to be sustained with over 2,500 visits being registered each day against this search site. Interested persons can obtain copies of the actual record by visiting one of six libraries in British Columbia, the BC Archives Reading Room in Victoria or by contacting the Agency to have a genealogy certificate produced. Persons outside of major urban centres in British Columbia have limited access to this service. An unsolicited proposal was received from the Agency's credit card authorisation company to serve digital images of these records from their secure WEB site. Using a revenue sharing model, costs and benefits would be shared by the participants in this proposal. Detailed design work was undertaken, and digital imaging was completed for all marriage records from 1872 to 1923 and death records for the same time period.

Future Plans

During the coming year, the BC Archives WEB site will be modified to support a "shopping basket" model for the sale of digital images. Clients will continue to use the BC Archives WEB site to search index records but in cases where the found index records are available as detailed digital images of the registration documents, this information will be provided. Clients will then be able to use their credit card to purchase the image, which will be immediately sent to them by electronic mail in the form of an attachment.

Based on the success of this model, revenue generated from the sales can be used to undertake the completion of the digital imaging of the records contained on the index site.

5.2.2. Restoration of Historical Indices

Following the discovery that the tapes containing the indexes to historical birth records from 1900 to 1940 had been damaged, a project was initiated with BC Archives to undertake the restoration of these indexes.

Plan Accomplishments

With the assistance of local genealogical volunteers, direct help from the Genealogical Society of Utah staff professionals and work by both BC Archives and Agency staff, the indexes for the period 1900 to 1918 were fully restored. A luncheon and award ceremony recognising the efforts of those volunteers involved was held. At that time a copy of the microfilm records were presented to the Victoria Genealogical Society and the West Coast Family History Centre for the permanent loan and use by genealogy society members.

Future Plans

Review will be undertaken of the existing microfilm records up to 1940 to ensure that their quality is being maintained. Where it is determined that the quality of these records is deteriorating and where duplicates of these films are not already held by the BC Archives, duplicate will be made. The original of the new films will be held by BC Archives and fresh copies provided to the Agency for their production work. This will extend the life of the microfilm and lessen the pressure to complete the index project until resources become available.

5.2.3. Historical Birth and Death Project

The electronic records of birth and death events do not contain full certificate information for events prior to 1985. In the 1999/2000 fiscal year, this project will focus on data entry of all the information required to enable full electronic production of birth certificates from 1940 onward. In the 2000/2001 fiscal year the project will shift emphasis to death records.

Plan Accomplishments

In 1999/2000, the Agency contracted out the data entry missing certificate information for approximately 600,000 birth registrations. By the end of the fiscal year the birth registry was capable of automatically issuing certificates on complete and correct applications associated with birth events back to1960. The original goal of 1.2 million records back to 1940 was not met as the volume was just too high for the time available.

Future Plans

In 2000/01 the addition of information to birth event records back to 1940 will be completed and the emphasis will shift to death records. Completion of the birth record project will reduce the requirement to refer to microfilm when a birth certificate is requested from 40% of requests to only six percent.

5.2.4. Data Quality Initiatives

With the implementation of the VSIS system in 1993 the process by which registration errors were identified and addressed was changed from a manual scan when the document was received to an electronic edit program following data entry of the record. This has resulted in a delay in the identification and resolution of some problems. The Registration Audit group will focus on earlier and more complete detecting of errors and the development of appropriate corrective action to reduce the number of incorrect documents received.

Plan Accomplishments

In 1999/2000, an audit of all notices of birth received was conducted. Through this audit it was identified that not all required fields on the notice were being completed and the edit programs were not identifying this situation correctly. Although edit programs were modified to identify all incorrect situations it was also determined that unless correction was achieved immediately upon receipt that it was difficult for hospitals to locate missing information. Until such time as it is possible to implement entry of birth notice data at the hospital pre-screening of all birth notices will be done prior to sending for data entry. This will ensure timely collection of missing information.

Future Plans

In 2000/2001, instructions will be incorporated on the reverse side of the notice of birth form and a separate physician's guide will be developed for reference to assist physicians and attendants. It is anticipated through prompt communication with hospitals that the quality of data should improve for these forms and may eliminate the requirement for pre-screening. Audits will also be conducted on marriage and death registrations to ensure data collection from service providers is of the highest quality.

5.3. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

5.3.1. Transfer Payroll Function from Ministry of Health

Since its inception the Agency has moved toward becoming fully independent of the Ministry in its financial operations. Payroll is the last financial function to remain with the Ministry.

Plan Accomplishments

In 1999/2000 this project remained on hold while the government conducted a review of the payroll function and conducted a benchmarking exercise for the government financial function.

Future Plans

The transfer of the Payroll function to the Agency from the Ministry has been placed on hold for the duration of the Government Payroll review and Financial Benchmarking project. It is expected that the payroll function will be more rather than less centralised and that for the near future this project will remain on hold.

5.3.2. Policy and Procedure Documentation

The many changes in and affecting the accounting function for the Agency over the past few years have resulted in identification of the need for the development of up to date finance and accounting policy and procedure documentation for the Agency.

Plan Accomplishments

Due to continuing workload associated with Vision Implementation, the development of a new chart of accounts, and other issues, this project has been postponed until fiscal 2000/01.

Future Plans

In order to ensure the completion of this project a co-op student has been hired to work on the project exclusively for four months in the summer of 2000.

5.3.3. E-Commerce

With the increasing popularity of debit cards, the Agency will review the initiative of the private sector in restricting the acceptance of cheques as a means of over the counter payments in regional offices. The Agency will continue to promote alternative access to services through direct order over the telephone, facsimile or Internet submissions.

Plan Accomplishments

Public acceptance of direct order over the telephone, facsimile and through the Internet has been profound for the Agency. Presently, close to 25% of all applications for certificates directly received by the Agency are handled in this manner. Feedback from clients using these methods has been extremely positive and this coupled with the improving timelines for processing of certificates requests has resulted in the Agency being able to provide one of the best Canadian service standards for Vital Event records amongst comparable jurisdictions. In addition to telephone orders, Internet order volume has seen a steady increase as this alternative becomes more and more a way of life with consumers. The use of secure server technology has meant that information privacy can be protected while at the same time providing clients anywhere in the world with a 7 day per week by 24 hour per day certificate ordering alternative.

Future Plans

Work will be undertaken to design the technical architecture necessary to allow a direct and secure connection between Internet applications taken in using the existing secure credit card server. This will allow, when implemented, for transactions initiated on the Internet to be processed without direct staff involvement.

5.4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND CONFIDENTIAL SERVICES

5.4.1. Human Resources/ Confidential Services

In the 1999/2000 fiscal year, the Agency will become more autonomous in its human resource functions by establishing a separate administrative group to manage both human resource and confidential service activities. Within the human resources framework it is expected that management will establish and maintain effective communication flows between the ministry, PSERC and the Agency in order to provide the most comprehensive service to clientele.

Plan Accomplishments

As planned the separate administrative group was established early in the fiscal year. This group handles all adoption related issues and processes, services to police and other government agencies and the processing of wills notice searches, in addition to managing and delivering human resources services to the Agency. At present a good working relationship exists with Ministry Human Resources staff although the direct relationship with PSERC is considered limited at present.

Future Plans

As one of its long-term goals, the Agency sees the creation of an exclusive business relationship with all central agencies that will not require the use of the Ministry of Health as a conduit for approval. A separate signing authority matrix for the Human Resources function and a closer working relationship with PSERC will be pursued in fiscal 2000/2001.

5.4.2. Consolidation of Adoption Indices

Over the years a number of indices related to adoption and associated records have been created. This has usually been the result of changing demands for information or changes in technology. Commencing in fiscal 1999 the indices will be consolidated to streamline workflow and eliminate duplication.

Plan Accomplishments

The Agency plans to link the indices through the creation of a unified MS Access database. This will allow the efficient retrieval of adoption related statistics that enhance the ability of the Agency to respond to information requests from a variety of clientele. Although begun in fiscal 1999/00, this remains an ongoing project, as there are over 70,000 records involved in the process.

6. REGIONAL SERVICES STRATEGY

6.1. SERVICE DELIVERY AND EFFICIENCY

6.1.1. Community Service Levels

The Vital Statistics Agency monitors service provider activity levels on a quarterly basis to determine and identify areas of deficiency or excessive activity levels which may be detrimental to efficient delivery of service.

Plan Accomplishments

Vital Statistics Agency Regional offices responded to both increased service demands and service provider volume activity by initiating over 250 new service provider appointments over the period 1999/2000. These appointments included:

53 District Registrar appointments;

49 Funeral Service Provider staff appointments as District Registrars;

16 Government Agent staff appointments (District Registrar and Marriage Licence Issuer);

20 Private Marriage Licence Issuers appointments (Includes Notaries Public);

34 Private Marriage Commissioner appointments; and

91 Temporary Marriage Commissioner appointments.

Future Plans

The active solicitation and documenting of community and stakeholder feedback regarding the full range of Vital Statistics services will continue to be carried out by the Vital Statistics Agency on an ongoing basis. This feedback will be combined with internal auditing tools available within the VISION application that allow the proactive monitoring of both vital event and service provider activity and volumes.

6.1.2. Alternative Service Delivery Sources

In order to enhance the availability and access to Vital Statistics services at the local community level, the Agency will continue to appoint a wide variety of service providers.

Plan Accomplishments

Contact was undertaken with a number of alternative service providers and efforts continue to explore these and other options.

Due to commitments of technology staff to ensuring that Year 2000 issues were properly addressed and that no issues would arise, Interactive Voice Response (IVR) alternatives were postponed until the following business plan year.

Future Plans

During the coming year, contact will be undertaken with individual insurance agencies to determine interest in providing marriage licence issuer services in communities not fully served for this service.

Meetings will be initiated with experts from the telephone industry to determine the potential for adding IVR options to the existing telephone information "tree". In particular, the ability of clients to ascertain the status of their Application For Service (AFS) related to a birth, marriage or death certificate will be explored. The current VISION client/server computer system would be used as the backbone to support this initiative.

In co-operation with other provinces, a national WEB site will be created which will allow clients to link from a single location with the information requirements for all provinces and territories in Canada related to Vital Events. Where provinces and territories already have this information on their WEB sites, "hot links" will be provided and for those provinces/territories who do not have this information, the central site will become the "residence" for this information. Funding alternatives to under-write the cost of this central WEB site will be explored including the potential for private sector involvement.

A detailed review of existing forms used relative to vital event activities will be undertaken to ensure that clients can download a copy of each form from the WEB site for the British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency. Where practical additional electronic forms will be added to assist clients in completing necessary documents.

6.1.3. VitalChek

The Agency has entered into a strategic partnership with VitalChek Network to provide credit card authorisation services related to vital event activities.

Plan Accomplishments

Ready acceptance of the use of telephone ordering and fax and Internet orders using credit cards allowed this option to continue to grow as a very important service option to clients. System interaction refinements were made between the Agency's computer system and the credit card system to enable timely and effective service. Work on "end of day" processes were completed which allowed staff to reconcile their activities in a less time consuming manner resulting in greater satisfaction amongst staff. Customer accolades for this service option continued to occur with regularity.

Future Plans

Work with VitalChek on the provision of credit card authorisation services related to the sale of digital images over the Internet will be undertaken in the coming year. Clients will be able to purchase digital images of historical marriage and death records using their credit cards. Authorisation of payment will occur in a virtually instantaneous manner permitting the delivery of record images by electronic mail.

6.2. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

6.2.1. Millennium Certificates

The positive response to Commemorative Certificates upon their introduction, highlighted a marketing opportunity whereby Millennium Commemorative Birth and Marriage Certificates would be offered to recognise vital events occurring in British Columbia during the year 2000.

Plan Accomplishments

The popular significance of the Year 2000 and the desire to mark and celebrate the new century was seen as an opportunity to provide an enhanced Commemorative Birth Certificate service as well as the addition of a new Commemorative Certificate to celebrate Millennium Marriages. During the design and implementation stages for the new certificates, a decision was made to further celebrate the significance of this day by issuing a free complementary Commemorative Certificate of the parent's choice for those babies born on January 1, 2000.

Working with Vital Statistics Headquarters, the Kelowna Regional Office was successful in accommodating a last minute enhancement of the VISION production system to allow on-site production of all commemorative certificates.

During the period January 1, 2000, through March 31, 2000, over 350 of the new Millennium Commemorative Birth certificates alone were issued. 117 birth events occurred on January 1, 2000 with over 80% of those events being properly registered and certificates issued prior to February 25, 2000.

6.2.2. Commemorative Marriage Certificates

Following the introduction of the Millennium Marriage certificates, the Agency has identified a public interest in a commemorative certificate which would clearly identify the geography and place setting which makes the celebration of a British Columbia Marriage both unique and memorable.

Plan Accomplishments

A Commemorative Millennium Marriage certificate was designed and made available to couples to celebrate those marriages occurring during the year 2000.

Future plans

Development and design of a new Commemorative Marriage Certificate will be undertaken to replace the current Millennium Marriage Certificate at the end of the Year 2000.

6.2.3. Marriage Commissioner's Marriage Ceremony Memento

Marriage commissioners routinely provide new couples with a memento of the ceremony performed on their behalf. The memento is not a legal certificate but simply a document that can be immediately issued by marriage commissioners upon completion of a ceremony.

Plan Accomplishments

The original document was redesigned to achieve a more thematic and pleasing presentation. The statement was enlarged to a standard document size of 8.5 x 11 inches and printed in a contemporary pale green and white flower motif. The protective envelope was correspondingly redesigned to accommodate the larger dimensions and produced in a generic white.

6.2.4. Partnership Registry

The Agency has proposed the development of a Partnership Registry to assist all couples who are living together in a "marriage like" relationship to register this union for the purposes of recognising benefits and responsibilities flowing to the partners from a particular point in time.

Plan Accomplishments

Detailed specifications as to the operation of this registry were completed and this information was referred to senior Ministry and Governmental officials for review.

Future Plans

No further action is required.

6.2.5. Plastic (credit card type) Birth Certificates

The public has identified a concern regarding the durability and ease of use of existing birth certificates. The Agency will investigate introducing a plastic "credit card" type of wallet sized birth certificate.

Plan Accomplishments

The Agency, through preliminary investigations, has identified those situations where the issuing of a plastic credit card style birth certificate would cause difficulties/problems for clients. In particular, "rush" services were identified as a potential roadblock to this service option; however, issues identified are seen as solvable.

Future Plans

The Agency will continue to pursue this issue.

6.2.6. Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Telephone System

An IVR system allows clients to enter personal identification information and in turn receive automated voice responses pertaining to particular service activities. In particular, the Agency wishes to explore the potential to provide IVR information related to the status of applications for certificates (example birth certificates).

Plan Accomplishments

Initial discussion with representatives from ITSD-Voice Services indicated that this option was under active review by ITSD-Voice Services; however initial cost estimates may preclude the Agency's participation at this time.

Future Plans

While initial review indicated limited practicality of this option, feedback from current users of the IVR option indicates alternative solutions exist. During the coming year a detailed review will be undertaken to determine the feasibility of a pilot implementation of this option.

6.2.7. Central Clearinghouse Function

At present, parents who have children born in more than one province must complete separate applications for birth certificates for each child and in turn each application and associated payment is sent to the separate jurisdictions for processing. Under a central clearinghouse function, each province participating in the service would use a common application form and a single point of payment would be provided for clients. In turn, the certificate request information would be sent to the jurisdictions participating and the ensuing certificate sent directly from that jurisdiction to the client.

Plan Accomplishments

During the past year, staff commitments necessary to ensure Year 2000 requirements were met did not allow this activity to be pursued.

Future Plans

Based on comments received from each provincial Vital Statistics jurisdiction, a common application form will be developed for each of birth and marriage certificates. Once adopted by participating jurisdictions, a further initiative can then be undertaken to develop and implement this clearinghouse option.

6.2.8. Validation of birth certificates

To detect fraud, the Agency will explore the use of technology to allow participating agencies to validate birth certificates presented to these agencies as proof of identity.

Plan Accomplishments

Discussion with other vital statistics agencies within Canada has resulted in expressions of interest from other provinces in pursuing a common approach to this activity.

6.2.9. Marriage Commissioner Selection and Training

In order to reduce travel time and costs, the Agency will determine the feasibility of video conferencing to aid in the selection and training of marriage commissioners in remote locations of the province.

Plan Accomplishments

Work with video conferencing suppliers identified cost as the single constraint against proceeding with this option. At present, services are available in major urban centres throughout the province, however, the hourly cost of their use is quite significant.

Future Plans

Ongoing technology developments will be continually monitored to determine if alternatives become available which will allow this option to be undertaken on a pilot basis.

6.3. POLICY AND PROCEDURES

6.3.1. Legislative Review

In anticipation of and in response to yearly calls for legislation, the Vital Statistics Agency ensures that its management team continuously reviews all aspects of relevant legislation and regulations which might impact its ongoing operations and service mandate.

Plan Accomplishments

During 1999/2000 the Agency made a number of legislative proposals which were submitted to the Ministry for Cabinet consideration including the following:

- *an amendment to the Vital Statistics Act to allow the Director to amend or alter a birth registration upon presentation of a court order of paternity;*
- *an amendment to the Vital Statistics Act and the Name Act to authorise a confidential change of name to protect the identity of individuals in life threatening circumstances; and*
- *an amendment to the Name Act which will require all applicants for a change of name to authorise a criminal record check.*

In addition to the above, two additional proposals were submitted to the Legislation & Professional Regulation Branch of the Ministry for consideration but subsequently not submitted to Cabinet:

- *Amendments to the Survivorship and Presumption of Death Act to create a central registry of presumption of death orders to be maintained by the Vital Statistics Agency and permitting the issuance of certificates for such records;*
- *Amendments to the Wills Act to require the mandatory filing of Wills Notices where a person has executed or revoked a will to facilitate estate settlements.*

Future Plans

The Agency will continue to promote those proposals that have been submitted but may not be tabled due to conflicting or current government priorities.

During 2000/2001 the Vital Statistics Agency will work closely with the Ministry of Attorney General to review all current legislation in order to assess impact of proposed changes to spousal and marriage definitions.

6.3.2. Guidebooks

The Agency will regularly review its reference materials to ensure that they reflect current policy and procedures. In order to simplify this process, the Agency's Policies and Procedures manual will be published on the internal web-site.

Plan Accomplishments

The Guidebook for Religious Representatives performing marriage ceremonies in British Columbia was updated and distributed, and a review of the Marriage Commissioner guidebook was undertaken.

In response to our increasing ethnicity, the Agency developed booklets on the Registration of Birth and Marriage, obtaining of certificates, and undergoing legal name changes in 5 languages, Mandarin, Chinese, Punjabi and Vietnamese.

Future Plans

In 2000/2001, a group of Marriage Commissioners will be chosen to assist in the final review of the Guidebook and then full distribution will occur. Following completion of this project, a new Guidebook for Vital Statistics Services Providers will be developed to outline the complete revenue collection and transmission process and to streamline some of their current functions.

The Agency will also seek agreement and funding from the Health Statistics Division of Statistics Canada for a set of standard booklets on how to register events and apply for services from a Canadian Vital Statistics office in the same languages and format as those produced in British Columbia.

6.4. AUDIT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

6.4.1. Surveys/Customer Satisfaction

The Agency will continue to review all responses and initiate a prompt follow-up with both clients and staff for those cases of complaint or client concern, and utilise the results as a key measure of the Agency's performance review process.

Plan Accomplishments

Results of customer satisfaction surveys are reported in section 3.4 of this report.

6.4.2. Data Standards and Quality/Edit Checks

Plan Accomplishments

As reported in section 13.2.2 of this report, continued participation in the Vital Statistics Counsil for Canada Data Standards and Quality Committee ensures that the Agency meets or exceeds federal and international standards for vital event registry data.

6.4.3. Performance Measurements

Plan Accomplishments

Performance measurements are discussed in their entirety in section 3 of this report.

6.4.4. Enforcement/Offence Provisions

Plan Accomplishments

The Agency, in consultation with legal counsel, continues to provide support to those Agencies requiring registry information to support enforcement provisions of their programs within the bounds of the Vital Statistics Act and other Acts administered by the Agency.

7. INFORMATION AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Director of Vital Statistics is mandated by sections 43 and 44 of the *Vital Statistics Act* to publish and distribute statistical information in the public interest respecting the contents of the Agency's registries and to publish an Annual statistical report on vital events registered during the preceding calendar year. The Manager, Information and Resource Management Branch, directs several small niche groups, each with its own area of expertise, but with overlapping responsibilities in the overall development of research products, to meet this legislated obligation.

7.1. STATISTICAL DATA ADMINISTRATION

Plan Accomplishments

The statistical Data Administration group performed tasks associated with the extraction and verification of data from the registry databases and the structuring and analysis of that material in support of the Agency's research endeavours. In addition, members of the group are involved in the ongoing development of the Data Warehouse and have collaborated in the ICD10 transition project.

7.2. DATA MANAGEMENT

Plan Accomplishments

The Data Management group performed tasks associated with record matching and the generation of standard data extracts. In addition, members of the group are involved in the ongoing development of the Data Warehouse, the Health Status Registry and have collaborated in the ICD10 transition project.

7.3. MEDICAL CODING

In the next five years, efforts will be made to increase the submission of electronic data from our sources by creating an automated interface for reporting sources.

It is anticipated that ICD10 will be implemented in the year 2000, which will include new updated MICAR/ACME software. Prior to the implementation, staff will be trained to accommodate this transition. The transition period from ICD9 to ICD10 is projected to be three years.

Plan Accomplishments

ICD10 codes are now being applied to new event data. Prior to the implementation of the new coding system, a great deal of time and effort was spent in the testing and analysis of the output from the converted ACME/MICAR programs. The Agency staff was heavily involved in this testing program making recommendations to their counterparts in Statistics Canada and the National Center for Health Statistics in the United States.

7.4. DATA ANALYSIS

Plan Accomplishments

The Data Analysis group is continually reviewing its publications and publicly available data in response to the changing needs of the client audience. In addition, the Branch is investigating the impact and opportunities presented by the implementation of a Vital Statistics Data Warehouse (VISTA) and changing data parameters, such as the introduction of ICD10.

Future Plans

Since ICD10 codes are being applied only to year 2000 events, no reports have yet been published that span the two systems. In 2000/2001 the diagnoses codes of the ICD9 and ICD10 will be mapped to provide continuity in all of the Agencies time series analyses.

7.5. PUBLICATIONS AND INTERNET SERVICES

Internet technology is emerging at an enormously fast pace continually challenging the VSWEB services group to upgrade the web site both in terms of the information content and the expediency of service provision. VSWEB technicians work closely with the publications group to ensure a smooth and accurate transmission from the printed to the electronic page. The group also works with the data warehouse development team to keep abreast of the opportunity to provide dynamic data services to Agency clients.

Plan Accomplishments

In order to streamline the production of published material, the desktop publishing and web services groups have been amalgamated. All Agency publications including statistical reports, educational material, promotional material and service forms, both in print and electronic format are now prepared by a single work group

The Internet continues to emerge as a focal point for service interaction. The Agency Internet usage has grown from handling about one million service requests annually to over two million, and is currently serving 78 megabytes of information per day.

Future Plans

The British Columbia Government has implemented new Internet standards. The Agency will work towards meeting these standards in the next fiscal year.

7.6. DATA DISSEMINATION

Mortality and natality coding will be moving from ICD9 to ICD10 in the year 2000 and the data warehouse will have to reflect both coding systems. The nurse consultant will be called upon to examine code translation tables, re-code historical data where necessary, and carry out code change impact studies. This will involve undertaking training in ICD10 use and assessing changes in MICAR and ACME software. Throughout this transition, issues around data quality as the adequacies or inadequacies of the new systems will need addressing.

Plan Accomplishments

ICD10 codes were produced for new registry events occurring after December 31, 1999. To this end the Health Statistics Division (HSD) of Statistics Canada trained nurse consultants from British Columbia Vital statistics Agency responsible for medical coding. Certain inadequacies in the ICD10 ACME and MICAR coding software were identified at this time. A series of edit rules had to be implemented to correct some of these inadequacies. Currently the Agency produces a set of edited and a set of unedited (for HSD) medical codes. The former will enable continuity in time series analyses for data spanning the two coding systems.

Future Plans

The process of mapping the codes between ICD9 and ICD10 and any required re-coding of pre-2000 events for use in the VISTA data warehouse project will continue. Issue papers that address the inadequacies of the automated coding software (ACME/MICAR) must also be written to provide documentation of the differences between edited BC data and the unedited HSD data.

8. LABOUR RELATIONS STRATEGY

The majority of employees within the Agency are represented by the British Columbia Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU) with a small number of Community Nurses being represented by the British Columbia Nurses' Union (BCNU). Each of these parties have their rights and responsibilities outlined in collective and component agreements that are made available to them upon employment within the Public Service.

In accordance with Section 2 of the British Columbia Labour Relations Code, the Agency encourages co-operative participation between the employer and employees' representative unions in resolving workplace issues, adapting to changes in the economy, developing workforce skills and promoting workplace productivity. To encourage the timely implementation of these objectives, the Agency has secured a human resources manager to act as a conduit to address any issues and concerns between the employer and employees.

Specific goals attached to the maintenance of effective employee relations include:

- the responsible provision of collective agreement interpretation to all employees;
- the timely resolution of all grievances at Step 1 of the grievance process;
- the maintenance of strong working relationships with Union representatives;
- establishing a balance between corporate goals and employee wellbeing; and
- the ongoing requirement for clear lines of communication between the parties.

9. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Agency is committed to the creation of a continuous learning environment and dedicates significant resources toward the achievement of this goal. In the next fiscal year, the Agency will take a further step in this strategy through the creation of a dedicated internal training position. This position will be responsible for managing the design, development and evaluation of program specific training and delivery mechanisms that are not available from external service providers. This will include the provision of unique training courses for users of the Agency's VISION database system, new applicants to the Marriage Commissioner program, and any other training initiatives required to assist Agency employees reach peak performance levels.

10. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY

10.1. YEAR 2000 PROBLEM PREVENTION

The entire Information System infrastructure had to be brought into Year 2000 compliance. Everything from the Agency's main operational system (VISION) to the smallest single-user application had to be examined and, if necessary, upgraded.

Plan Accomplishments

All applications and computer hardware were examined and, if required, upgraded to Year 2000 compliance. Not a single problem was encountered by the Agency in the rollover to the year 2000.

In addition, these upgrades provide the Agency with the enhanced infrastructure to allow for future improvements during the coming years.

10.2. VISION ENHANCEMENTS

The Agency has made a commitment to continue enhancing VISION to provide greater functionality for service delivery to the public. Also, in 1999/2000, the Agency planned to continue to market VISION to other jurisdictions in North America.

Plan Accomplishments

Complete Birth Registration information from 1961 to 1985 was loaded onto VISION. This enabled many more Birth Certificate requests to be processed without manual intervention, with a corresponding reduction in processing time.

The Agency also introduced commemorative Millennium Birth and Marriage certificates for people born or married during 2000. These have proved to be popular items, with over 1,400 Millennium Birth certificates and 200 Millennium Marriage certificates sold to date.

Following on the agreement with Ohio in fiscal 1998/99, the state of Michigan has purchased the rights to utilise the VISION product. In addition, several other American states, along with several Canadian provinces and Territories, have shown a high level of interest in obtaining the system.

Future Plans

In 2000/2001, the Agency plans to complete the loading of full Birth information onto VISION back to 1930. This will enhance delivery to the public for people requiring birth certificates in order to obtain their CPP and OAS benefits.

The Agency plans to continue marketing VISION to other American states and Canadian Provinces and Territories. In addition, other countries and the United Nations have expressed an interest, and we will provide them any information that they request.

10.3. NATIONAL VITAL EVENTS DATA CAPTURE AND ROUTING SYSTEM

Statistics Canada sponsored a project to create a Canada-wide system for the transmission of vital events data from the providers (hospital, funeral homes, etc.) to both the provincial and federal Vital Statistics areas. This would provide Statistics Canada with more timely and more accurate data, and would provide the provincial and territorial agencies with a means of obtaining their data electronically.

Plan Accomplishments

The British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency is acting as the Project Manager and, with contracted assistance, created the RFP, examined the resulting submissions, and selected the contracting company to develop the Conceptual Design. The Agency is working closely with the Vital Statistics Council for Canada, Statistics Canada, and the contractor to ensure that the desired system is built.

Future Plans

The Agency will continue to provide leadership on this project until its conclusion (estimated to be in 2004).

10.4. EXPANSION OF ACCESS TO VISION

The Agency has identified a number of projects that will deploy VISION to a wider group of service providers.

Plan Accomplishments

The Agency upgraded its I.T. infrastructure and security and created Web screens for use by the Government Agents. Two GA pilot offices are now using these inquiries on VISION to view Applications for Service.

Future Plans

In 2000/2001, the Agency plans to expand the GA Web application to all GA offices with Web access, and to enhance the application to allow entry of AFS and printing of certificates at the GA office. In addition, the Agency plans to create another Web access to allow the Funeral Homes to enter Death Registrations and Death Certificate AFS.

10.5. DATA WAREHOUSE

The Agency is embarking on the development of a single cohesive business intelligence system, tightly integrated with the VISION application, to improve the ability to meet its internal needs and those of its clients.

Plan Accomplishments

The Agency has begun both the Data and Business Analysis for the data warehouse and also the evaluation of data access and data capture tools.

Future Plans

In 2000/2001, the Agency is planning to complete the analysis and evaluation and begin building the data warehouse.

10.6. INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF DISEASES - VERSION 10 (ICD10)

ICD10 became the Statistics Canada standard on January 1, 2000. In addition, the new release of the medical coding software from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) used ICD10 codes, and the World Health Organisation (WHO) was moving towards ICD10.

Plan Accomplishments

The entire ICD10 set of codes was loaded into VISION and the new NCHS software was obtained for the Agency's medical coding staff. The VISION application was converted to use ICD10 codes for all events after 1999, and to retain the ICD9 codes for events prior to 2000.

11. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The Agency continues to exercise its right to internally manage communication issues that are specifically addressed and pre-approved in the Agency's business plans.

The Agency has in-house technical staff members who are well versed in graphic design and pre-production layout work that follows the Agency's, the Ministry's and the BC Government's graphic design standards for conventional and Internet publication.

The Agency continues to use the expertise of the Ministry's Communication Branch in a number of important areas. The Agency handles most day-to-day media requests for standard statistical information; however, the Ministry's Communication Branch is consulted in all press releases and media-related or sensitive issues. The Branch is also consulted for valuable counsel in all new external communication initiatives.

12. HEALTH STATUS REGISTRY

Preliminary work on the 5 year business plan for the Health Status Registry identified three major issues: the implementation of a server based multi-user interface; conversion of geographic codes to new Local Health Area boundaries; and conversion of medical codes to ICD10 codes. Furthermore, additional sources of information and efficient interfaces to that information must be developed.

12.1. CREATION OF MULTI-USER INTERFACE

Plan Accomplishments

The HSR Access database system was installed on a fast network server allowing multiple users to readily access and maintain the database. Research requests from a variety of sources have been processed more efficiently since this change.

Future Plans

A Feature Report has been prepared and will be released in the fall of 2000. It will include data inclusive to the end of 1998. Further efficiency in data maintenance will be achieved by converting the database to a true client server model using Oracle software.

12.2. GEOGRAPHIC CODE CONVERSION

Plan Accomplishments

The HSR system maintains postal code records, which are translated to currently used geographic boundaries.

12.3. ICD10 CODING

Plan Accomplishments

The HSR database has been analysed with respect to accepting ICD10 codes. Load programs have been modified and edit rules amended to accept ICD10 formats.

Future Plans

No reports have been generated that span the use of both ICD9 and ICD10 codes. Strategies that recognise subtleties between the code alignments in the two systems must be implemented when such analyses are undertaken.

12.4. NEW DATA SOURCES

Plan Accomplishments

Hospital Program data from the Ministry of Health has been added to the HSR, as has data from the Children's and Women's Health Centre, BC Medical Genetics Program and the Victoria General Hospital.

Future Plans

The HSR plans to include the collection of congenital anomaly data from medically terminated pregnancies.

13. VITAL STATISTICS COUNCIL FOR CANADA

13.1. DESCRIPTION

All provincial and territorial government departments in Canada partner with Statistics Canada to minimise the reporting burden on Canadians of vital event data whose collection is mandated by both provincial and federal legislation. The Vital Statistics Council for Canada facilitates this partnership.

13.1.1. Key Business Functions

- organise an annual inter-jurisdictional forum to discuss issues around registration and certification of births, deaths, marriages, stillbirths and changes of names;
- facilitate sharing, exchange and retention of information, data and research between jurisdictions;
- discuss, with a view to achieving common approaches and uniformity where appropriate, the forms and certificates being used, the governing legislation, the procedures and format of the transfer and receipt of national and provincial/territorial data from Statistics Canada;
- liaise with all groups of service providers (e.g. physicians, coroners, funeral directors, law enforcement agencies, lawyers, notaries, etc.);
- liaise with other federal and provincial government departments, including Passport Office, Family Allowance, and Social Services;
- support and achieve a synergy of a national data base; and
- liaise with US counterparts.

13.2. MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

13.2.1. Participation of the Director of Vital Statistics

The Director/CEO of the Agency co-ordinates the development of the annual business plan of the Council and its long-term strategic plans. Additionally the Director chairs the Committee on Electronic Birth and Death Registration, and represents the Council on a sub-committee of National Association of Public Health Statistics and Information Systems for the implementation of ICD10 medical coding.

Plan Accomplishments

The Director of Vital Statistics for British Columbia assisted the Council with support for many of its initiatives of the past fiscal year. Notable was his work in getting the Vital Statistics Council Internet site (http://www.vscouncil.ca) approved and established and as chair of the National Routing System Steering Committee.

13.2.2. Data Standards and Quality Sub Committee

A member of the Agency's Resource Management Branch participates as a member and works with Council and HSD/STC to develop and implement data quality initiatives and recommendation of data standards for Council as well as the maintenance of a data dictionary for all Provinces.

Plan Accomplishments

Several teleconferences were held during the fiscal year. The committee submitted a listing of common data elements and a rational for the collection of data elements to Council for review.

Future Plans

This is a standing committee of the Council. The Agency will continue to support the committee by providing a member to represent the Agency's position.

13.2.3. Certificate and Security Sub Committee

The Agency as a member of the Canadian Vital Statistics Council has played an active role in many of the representative working committees of the Council. One of these roles has been related to the review, tendering, analysis and seeking of alternatives related to the printing of Vital Event Certificates. Currently all nine provinces and two territories use a common certificate design and share the ordering of certificates to achieve uniformity of document design which further enhances the security of these documents when used by other Agencies.

Plan Accomplishments

The committee reviewed and renewed the certificate stock supply contract. The printing of certificates by laser printer has been adopted by the British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency.

Future Plans

This is a standing committee of the Council. The Agency will continue to support the committee by providing a member to represent the Agency's position.

13.2.4. Legislation, Freedom of Information and Forms

A Regional Manager will participate in the ongoing efforts of council to ensure legislation and forms are as uniform as possible. The Agency will ensure that practices and policies follow similar standards and documentation requirements. A member of the Agency's staff will continue to maintain the comparative analysis documentation on Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation and its impact on Vital Statistics legislation and operations.

13.2.5. Confidential Change of Name

The Deputy Director of the Agency is a member of the Confidential Change of Name Committee of Council and has taken a lead role in the development of policy proposals to Council in this area.

Plan Accomplishments

In fiscal 1999/2000 the Agency Deputy Director was named chair of this committee and represented Council at meetings of the federal co-ordinating committee for the New Identities Project, ensuring that Councils objectives continue to be taken into consideration at the federal level. The Deputy Director continues to work closely with the BC Ministry of the Attorney General, Victims Services Program in the development of Services to meet the needs of victims of spousal abuse.

Future Plans

BC Vital Statistics will continue with its involvement and support of this committee for as long as is required.

13.2.6. Adoption Information Committee

In 1998 the Vital Statistics Council initiated a project to review the requirements of Vital Statistics organisations in the processing of adoption information, especially as it relates to the transfer of information between jurisdictions. The Deputy Director of the Agency is a member of the Committee.

Plan Accomplishments

The Committee prepared a report for Council including recommendations to standardise the content and transfer of adoption information between jurisdictions. The recommendations were accepted and the Deputy Director, with the assistance of the Confidential Service Section is assisting Council in the implementation process.

Future Plans

The Agency expects to implement the new standards in BC in 2001.

APPENDIX A: EXPENDITURE DETAIL 1999/2000

STOB		BUDGET 1999/2000	ACTUAL 1999/2000	VARIANCE 1999/2000
01	**SALARIES**	**3,812,000**	**3,897,771**	**(85,771)**
	BASE SALARIES	3,762,000	3,809,526	(47,526)
	RETRO PAY	0	0	0
	OVERTIME	30,000	19,709	10,291
	LUMP SUM	20,000	44,646	(24,646)
	LEAVE LIABILITY ADJUSTMENT	0	23,890	(23,890)
02	**SUPPLEMENTARY SALARIES**	**59,000**	**42,921**	**16,079**
03	**EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**	**800,000**	**841,174**	**(41,174)**
10	**TRAVEL**	**50,000**	**58,402**	**(8,402)**
20	**PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**	**8,000**	**11,131**	**(3,131)**
	ARMOURED CAR SERVICES	8,000	7,026	974
	GENERAL PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	0	4,105	(4,105)
21	**ADVISORY CONTRACTS**	**25,000**	**0**	**25,000**
25	**INFORMATION SYSTEMS**	**1,223,000**	**1,179,999**	**43,001**
	TELECOMMUNICATIONS	300,000	311,465	(11,465)
	CONTRACTED DATA ENTRY	340,000	255,074	84,926
	COMPUTER PROCESSING	255,000	196,924	58,076
	INFORMATION SYSTEMS CONSULTING	87,000	276,487	(189,487)
	OTHER PROCESSING	241,000	140,046	100,954
30	**OFFICE AND BUSINESS EXPENSES**	**564,000**	**668,249**	**(104,249)**
	OFFICE EXPENSES - GENERAL	13,000	26,857	(13,857)
	WAREHOUSING	14,000	18,040	(4,040)
	PRINTING SUPPLIES	12,500	30,484	(17,984)
	FORMS	80,000	91,726	(11,726)
	PRINTED MATERIALS	61,500	79,352	(17,852)
	OFFICE STATIONARY AND SUPPLIES	24,500	18,708	5,792
	MINOR FURNITURE	12,000	18,690	(6,690)
	POSTAL SERVICES	210,000	227,659	(17,659)
	PHOTOCOPIERS	18,000	17,037	963
	COURIER SERVICES	94,000	69,275	24,725
	TRAINING	14,000	47,062	(33,062)
	BUSINESS EXPENSES	3,500	23,359	(19,859)
	OTHER	7,000	0	7,000
31	**OFFICE FURNITURE**	**56,000**	**97,446**	**(41,446)**
42	**STATUTORY NOTICES**	**116,000**	**109,996**	**6,004**
	CHANGE OF NAME ADVERTISING	80,000	84,408	(4,408)
	ANNUAL REPORT	35,000	22,905	12,095
	OTHER	1,000	1,993	(993)

APPENDIX A: EXPENDITURE DETAIL 1999/2000

STOB		BUDGET 1999/2000	ACTUAL 1999/2000	VARIANCE 1999/2000
01	**SALARIES**	**3,812,000**	**3,897,771**	**(85,771)**
	BASE SALARIES	3,762,000	3,809,526	(47,526)
	RETRO PAY	0	0	0
	OVERTIME	30,000	19,709	10,291
	LUMP SUM	20,000	44,646	(24,646)
	LEAVE LIABILITY ADJUSTMENT	0	23,890	(23,890)
02	**SUPPLEMENTARY SALARIES**	**59,000**	**42,921**	**16,079**
03	**EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**	**800,000**	**841,174**	**(41,174)**
10	**TRAVEL**	**50,000**	**58,402**	**(8,402)**
20	**PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**	**8,000**	**11,131**	**(3,131)**
	ARMOURED CAR SERVICES	8,000	7,026	974
	GENERAL PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	0	4,105	(4,105)
21	**ADVISORY CONTRACTS**	**25,000**	**0**	**25,000**
25	**INFORMATION SYSTEMS**	**1,223,000**	**1,179,996**	**43,004**
	TELECOMMUNICATIONS	300,000	311,465	(11,465)
	CONTRACTED DATA ENTRY	340,000	255,074	84,926
	COMPUTER PROCESSING	255,000	196,924	58,076
	INFORMATION SYSTEMS CONSULTING	87,000	276,487	(189,487)
	OTHER PROCESSING	241,000	140,046	100,954
30	**OFFICE AND BUSINESS EXPENSES**	**564,000**	**668,249**	**(104,249)**
	OFFICE EXPENSES - GENERAL	13,000	26,857	(13,857)
	WAREHOUSING	14,000	18,040	(4,040)
	PRINTING SUPPLIES	12,500	30,484	(17,984)
	FORMS	80,000	91,726	(11,726)
	PRINTED MATERIALS	61,500	79,352	(17,852)
	OFFICE STATIONARY AND SUPPLIES	24,500	18,708	5,792
	MINOR FURNITURE	12,000	18,690	(6,690)
	POSTAL SERVICES	210,000	227,659	(17,659)
	PHOTOCOPIERS	18,000	17,037	963
	COURIER SERVICES	94,000	69,275	24,725
	TRAINING	14,000	47,062	(33,062)
	BUSINESS EXPENSES	3,500	23,359	(19,859)
	OTHER	7,000	0	7,000
31	**OFFICE FURNITURE**	**56,000**	**97,446**	**(41,446)**
42	**STATUTORY NOTICES**	**116,000**	**109,306**	**6,694**
	CHANGE OF NAME ADVERTISING	80,000	84,408	(4,408)
	ANNUAL REPORT	35,000	22,905	12,095
	OTHER	1,000	1,993	(993)

Expenditure Detail 1999/2000 (cont'd)

STOB		BUDGET 199/2000	ACTUAL 199/2000	VARIANCE 199/2000
50	**UTILITIES/MATERIALS/SUPPLIES**	**53,000**	**67,762**	**(14,762)**
	MICROFILMING	28,000	38,340	(10,340)
	MICRO EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE	10,000	13,408	(3,408)
	LEASE VEHICLES	9,000	3,797	5,203
	OTHER	6,000	12,217	(6,217)
60	**AMORTIZATION EXPENSE**	**421,000**	**228,239**	**192,761**
65	**BUILDING OCCUPANCY CHARGES**	**556,000**	**560,481**	**(4,481)**
	VICTORIA	374,000	373,452	548
	VANCOUVER	64,000	67,422	(3,422)
	KELOWNA	58,000	54,954	3,046
	PRINCE GEORGE	40,000	33,636	6,364
	LEASHOLD IMPROVEMENTS	20,000	31,017	(11,017)
80	**GRANTS**	**18,000**	**0**	**18,000**
	GRANTS TO UNIVERSITIES	18,000	0	18,000
82	**CONTRIBUTIONS**	**56,000**	**56,952**	**(952)**
	DISTRICT REGISTRAR ANCILLARY FEES	9,000	4,466	4,534
	DISTRICT REGISTRAR COMMISSIONS	45,000	51,433	(6,433)
	NON-PUBLIC SERVANT TRAVEL	2,000	1,053	947
	GROSS APPROPRIATED EXPENDITURES	**7,817,000**	**7,819,831**	**(2,830)**
97	**INTERNAL RECOVERIES**	**(276,000)**	**(314,819)**	**(38,819)**
	MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SERVICES	(255,000)	(276,500)	(21,500)
	OTHER MINISTRIES	(21,000)	(38,319)	(17,319)
99	**RECOVERIES - EXTERNAL**	**(383,000)**	**(560,881)**	**(177,881)**
	FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	(124,000)	(198,574)	(74,574)
	ADOPTIONS	(40,000)	(39,762)	238
	COMMEMORATIVES	(122,000)	(133,450)	(11,450)
	GENEALOGY	(81,000)	(135,080)	(54,080)
	RESEARCH	(10,000)	(41,149)	(31,149)
	OTHER SALES	(6,000)	(12,866)	(6,866)
	NET APPROPRIATED EXPENDITURES	**7,158,000**	**6,944,131**	**213,870**
CAPITAL ACQUISITIONS				
68	**SYSTEMS ASSET ACQUISITIONS**	**635,000**	**525,204**	**109,796**
	SERVER HARDWARE	155,000	55,239	99,761
	SERVER SOFTWARE	370,000	211,083	158,917
	PC HARDWARE	90,000	242,393	(152,393)
	PC SOFTWARE	20,000	16,489	3,511
75	**MACHINE/EQUIPMENT ACQUISITIONS**	**55,000**	**43,091**	**11,909**
	TOTAL CAPITAL ACQUISITIONS	**690,000**	**568,295**	**121,705**

Expenditure Detail 1999/2000 (cont'd)

STOB		BUDGET 199/2000	ACTUAL 199/2000	VARIANCE 199/2000
50	**UTILITIES/MATERIALS/SUPPLIES**	**53,000**	**67,762**	**(14,762)**
	MICROFILMING	28,000	38,340	(10,340)
	MICRO EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE	10,000	13,408	(3,408)
	LEASE VEHICLES	9,000	3,797	5,203
	OTHER	6,000	12,217	(6,217)
60	**AMORTIZATION EXPENSE**	**421,000**	**228,239**	**192,761**
65	**BUILDING OCCUPANCY CHARGES**	**556,000**	**560,481**	**(4,481)**
	VICTORIA	374,000	373,452	548
	VANCOUVER	64,000	67,422	(3,422)
	KELOWNA	58,000	54,954	3,046
	PRINCE GEORGE	40,000	33,636	6,364
	LEASHOLD IMPROVEMENTS	20,000	31,017	(11,017)
80	**GRANTS**	**18,000**	**0**	**18,000**
	GRANTS TO UNIVERSITIES	18,000	0	18,000
82	**CONTRIBUTIONS**	**56,000**	**56,952**	**(952)**
	DISTRICT REGISTRAR ANCILLARY FEES	9,000	4,466	4,534
	DISTRICT REGISTRAR COMMISSIONS	45,000	51,433	(6,433)
	NON-PUBLIC SERVANT TRAVEL	2,000	1,053	947
	GROSS APPROPRIATED EXPENDITURES	**7,817,000**	**7,819,831**	**(2,830)**
97	**INTERNAL RECOVERIES**	**(276,000)**	**(314,819)**	**(38,819)**
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	OTHER MINISTRIES	(21,000)	(38,319)	(17,319)
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	COMMEMORATIVES	(122,000)	(133,450)	(11,450)
	GENEALOGY	(81,000)	(135,080)	(54,080)
	RESEARCH	(10,000)	(41,149)	(31,149)
	OTHER SALES	(6,000)	(12,866)	(6,866)
	NET APPROPRIATED EXPENDITURES	**7,158,000**	**6,944,131**	**213,870**
CAPITAL ACQUISITIONS				
68	**SYSTEMS ASSET ACQUISITIONS**	**635,000**	**525,204**	**109,796**
	SERVER HARDWARE	155,000	55,239	99,761
	SERVER SOFTWARE	370,000	211,083	158,917
	PC HARDWARE	90,000	242,393	(152,393)
	PC SOFTWARE	20,000	16,489	3,511
75	**MACHINE/EQUIPMENT ACQUISITIONS**	**55,000**	**43,091**	**11,909**
	TOTAL CAPITAL ACQUISITIONS	**690,000**	**568,295**	**121,705**

APPENDIX B: STATUS REPORT ON FLEXIBILITY POLICIES

As part of establishing Vital Statistics as a Special Operating Agency, a number of policy flexibilities were granted to the new Special Operating Agency by Treasury Board. The original flexibility policies are located in the Agency Framework Agreement signed March 14, 1996. As a result of excellent performance in the first three years as a SOA, Treasury Board agreed to the negotiation of additional flexibilities during the period of the 1999-2004 Business Plan. Additional flexibilities are currently under negotiation between the Agency and Treasury Board Staff.

B.1 APPROPRIATION CONTROLS

B.1.1 Expenditure Carryovers

The Agency has realised operating budget surpluses in each year since its establishment as a SOA in fiscal 1996/97. The accumulated operating surplus including the fiscal 1999/2000 surplus of $213,870 is $1,011,064. With the addition of the capital surplus of $121,048 in fiscal 1999/2000 the total surpluses generated by the Agency to date are $1,132,112. (In fiscal 1999/2000, $200,000 in carry over funds were included in the $7.5 million pre-budget target established by Treasury Board. As the budget submitted by the Agency was over $0.3 million below the target, the Agency believes that it is fair to say that it has not been required to access this flexibility to date. As the Agency has continued to reduce its budget while at the same time generating surpluses future cost pressures, especially as they relate to capital replacement may result in the need to access this flexibility. For this reason the Agency and Treasury Board staff are negotiating a formula for implementing expenditure carryovers.

B.1.2 Multi-year Budgeting

Informally, the Agency and Treasury Board staff have effectively invoked this flexibility through the establishment of the spending plans in the business plan. It has been agreed that spending undertaken to meet business plan objectives, within context of the total annual appropriation, is an acceptable implementation of this flexibility given present legislative constraints. Due to the recent implementation of capital budgeting policies by government the need to establish mechanisms to ensure flexibility in the timing of capital acquisitions are required to ensure effective and efficient management of capital acquisitions over multiple fiscal years. A formal process for implementing carryover of capital budget surpluses would fully establish this flexibility.

B.1.3 Spending of Recoveries Above Estimates

Although the Agency realised significant recoveries above estimates in each of the last four fiscal years it has to date been unable to fully access this flexibility. This has been due partially to the Agency's desire to operate within the "spirit" of government restraint initiatives and the absence of a process to access surpluses from prior years (the extent of recoveries above estimates may not be recognised until close to the end of the fiscal year when little or no time is available to initiate projects utilising these funds). Establishment

of a mechanism to access prior year's expenditure carryovers will facilitate access to this flexibility.

B.1.4 Exemption from Expenditure Restraint Exercises

With the establishment of the Agency as an independent financial accounting entity and placement of out of province travel plans in its annual Business Plan the Agency has fully implemented this flexibility. The Agency recognises the need for restraint and as a result continues to operate in the spirit of restraint during periods of cross government restraint exercises.

B.2 ACCOMMODATION

B.2.1 Authority to Implement Accommodation and Major Project Plans Approved in the Business Plan

The Agency has the authority to implement accommodation and Major Project plans approved in the Business Plan. This flexibility was implemented in fiscal 1996/97 in order to reduce space requirements in the Vancouver Regional office in compliance with the 1996/97 Business Plan. These plans were fully implemented in fiscal 1997/98.

B.2.2 Authority to Contract With B.C.B.C. or a Private Company

The Agency has the authority to contract with B.C.B.C. or a private company. As partners, B.C.B.C. representatives and the Agency continue to analyse lease options, overhead and maintenance agreements to determine if cost savings can be identified.

Experience to date indicates that B.C.B.C. continues to be committed to maintaining a good working relationship with the Agency.

B.3 ADVERTISING AND PUBLICATIONS

B.3.1 Communications Plan

With the support of Treasury Board the Agency may negotiate agreements and obtain pre-approval of a communications plan and budget from the Government Communications Office. This flexibility has been fully implemented as it applies to Vital Statistics operations under complete control of the Agency.

B.3.2 Control of Communications Activities

The Agency is authorised to have direct control of communications activities, commitments and expenditures as outlined in the annual communications plan. This flexibility has been fully implemented.

B.4 AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS

The Agency has fully implemented its authority in negotiating and signing all intra and inter governmental agreements to which the Agency is party. Data access and recovery

agreements have been struck with numerous provincial and federal ministries as well as vital statistics organisations in other provinces. The Agency is currently pursuing the possibility of providing vital statistics systems services for other Canadian provinces.

B.5 CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

The Agency had implemented full authority over capital expenditures less than $250,000 prior to the implementation of the government's new accounting and budgeting policies for capital. The Agency has identified the need to work with Treasury Board Staff to establish a method of re-implementing this flexibility within the context of the new capital policies. This item should be addressed during fiscal 2000/01. With the exception of systems development, no capital expenditures exceeding $250,000 were included in the Business Plan or undertaken in fiscal 1999/2000.

B.6 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

B.6.1 Systems Expenditures

The flexibility authorises the Agency to spend up to $1 million and up to 10% above amounts identified in the Business Plan as planned expenditures. The authority of the Agency to take advantage of this flexibility is now fully recognised by the Ministry. This flexibility has been fully implemented.

B.6.2 Development of Cost Effective Systems Solutions

As a result of the Agency's ability to develop its own systems solutions the Agency has been able to attain and exceed its spending reduction targets over the past four fiscal years. The Agency continues to work with ITSD to develop innovative solutions applicable to other organisations as part of its systems development projects.

B.7 MACHINERY, EQUIPMENT, LAND, BUILDINGS AND WORKS

The Agency is authorised to purchase or lease machinery and equipment up to a cost of $1 million if any item over $250,000 is included in the Business Plan. There has been no requirement to exercise this flexibility to date.

B.8 SERVICE CONTRACTS/CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

The Agency has the authority to enter into service contracts up to $250,000, provided contracts are tendered using government policy. All contracts entered into by the Agency in 1999/2000 were less than $250,000. The Agency tenders and manages its own contracts and receives assistance from the Ministry and Purchasing Commission at the Agency's request.

B.9 STAFFING LIMITS

The Agency is permitted access to the Government's Corporate FTE complement for additional FTE requirements that are related to unanticipated volume demands. The Agency has not been required to use this access as it has been under its FTE budget in all fiscal years since this flexibility was granted.

B.10 VEHICLE MANAGEMENT

The Agency is authorised to enter into its own vehicle management and leasing program. The Agency continued to manage its own vehicles throughout 1999/2000 though leases continued to be contracted through the Ministry. The Agency will assume responsibility for its own leasing arrangements in fiscal 2000/01.

B.11 PAYMENTS BASED ON CONTRIBUTIONS

The Agency has authority to approve grants to a maximum of $250,000 on a per item basis, and up to $1 million if detailed in the Business Plan. There were no grants in excess of $250,000 in 1999/2000.

B.12 PURCHASE OF MATERIAL

The Agency has the authority to negotiate with the Purchasing Commission or to purchase through independent suppliers. The Agency has worked with the Purchasing Commission on purchases of major items and only exercised independent authority for minor items where it has been established that it is cost effective to do so.

B.13 SALES OF SURPLUS ASSETS

The Agency has the ability to contract asset disposal with either the Purchasing Commission or with the private sector with revenue to be directly returned to the Agency. Based on a limited amount of equipment identified as surplus and due to Ministry needs, the Agency has continued to ship surplus equipment to the Ministry for redistribution.

B.14 MICROGRAPHIC SERVICES AND EQUIPMENT

The Agency has authority to purchase micrographic services and equipment up to $500,000 but the Agency's purchase of micrographic services and equipment did not exceed $52,000 for the 1999/2000 fiscal year.

B.15 BC MAIL PLUS

The Agency is authorised to purchase or contract for postal equipment or services to meet its specific requirements, or may continue to contract with BC Mail Plus. In fiscal 1999/2000 the Agency continued to contract a number of hospital auxiliaries to stuff birth information packages and ensure current stock were maintained on hospital maternity wards. Stuffing and distribution to hospitals was previously contracted with BC Mail Plus. Cost has been reduced by approximately $8,000 annually and contracting with hospital auxiliaries has proven to be more effective as materials are readily available on maternity wards when and where they are required.

B.16 PHOTOCOPYING EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

The authority for approval for the purchase of photocopying equipment and related service contracts has been delegated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Agency. In fiscal 1999/2000 the Agency has exercised its authority only to replace obsolete equipment as the Ministry continues to supply cost effective Quick Print Services.

B.16.1 Government Records and Recorded Information Management

The Agency has full authority over records and recorded information management within the scope of the *Financial Administration Act* and associated government policy. As implementation of this flexibility is not considered a high priority, the Agency has continued to use Ministry records management services.

B.17 TRAVEL

B.17.1 Accommodation Policies

The Agency is authorised to exceed overnight accommodation rates where it is cost justifiable. Establishment of the Agency as its own financial accounting entity has enabled the Agency to fully implement this flexibility, though only minimal utilisation was required in fiscal 1999/2000.

B.17.2 Out of Province Travel

The Agency is approved to authorise travel within Canada (outside British Columbia) and the United States for established business purposes. This flexibility has been fully implemented though annual out of province travel plans are submitted to Treasury Board Staff at the beginning of the fiscal year for confirmation.

B.17.3 Payment of Travel Claims

The Agency has the authority to implement alternative processes for the processing and payment of travel claims (e.g. SFO Bank Account). Due to the implementation of the CAS system, the use of American Express Corporate Cards for travel and the establishment of the Agency as its own financial accounting entity, there is no longer a requirement for alternative processes.

B.17.4 Contracted Travel Services

The Agency is authorised to make its own travel arrangements or make use of the Ministry contracted travel agency. The Agency has continued to make use of the Ministry travel agency though maintains its own business travel account. The Agency will be monitoring changes in the travel industry during fiscal 2000/01 to determine the most cost-effective means of meeting its needs.

B.18 HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY

B.18.1 Staffing and Classification Issues

The CEO may review staffing and classification issues directly with PSERC where essential to meet the business success of the Agency. To date there has been no requirement to make use of this flexibility provision.

B.18.2Employee Incentives and Rewards

The Agency may provide work-related incentives and rewards over and above those normally available. The Agency established a small fund in its fiscal 1998/99 budget to provide token (non-financial) awards to employees. The Agency has fully implemented the provincial governments Staff Appreciation Awards Policy in order to recognise outstanding employee performance. Due to the success of the Agency in obtaining recognition and awards for its employees through the Employee Recognition Program, and through the Public Service Awards Program, additional awards over and above those normally available were not deemed necessary in the past fiscal year.

B.18.3FTE Freeze Exemption

The Agency is authorised to operate within its approved Business Plan and will be exempt from Treasury Board FTE freezes. This flexibility has been implemented within the context of Government/Ministry employee placement programs. Although the Agency has not been required to obtain additional FTEs under this flexibility the Agency has been able to fill vacant positions. There has been a negative impact resulting from employee placement programs as employees are placed on the basis of seniority; placements are frequently unqualified for the positions in which they are placed resulting in extensive training being required with a high turnover of some placements.